

**Consumer office here?**

Mississauga - Federal  
Constituency

027-7611V

# Abbott grilled on vital issues

LPC

By TINA IVANY

Six Mississauga residents last weekend discovered the value of having their MP sit in the federal cabinet.

At a Saturday morning meeting arranged by The Mississauga News in the Inland Publishing Co. Limited boardroom, they had the opportunity to air their consumer concerns to Consumer Affairs minister, Tony Abbott, concerns on which the Mississauga MP promised action.

They also learned that there is a strong possibility that a branch office of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will soon open in Mississauga. Stating that the operation would be "small but productive," Abbott said the branch would be staffed by inspectors and representatives from the federal department to directly handle complaints and consumer inquiries.

A number of issues were raised by Jennifer and Fraser Code, Pat and Allan Currie, Jane Brown and Judy Duncan during the two-hour session.

Those issues included discussions on children's car seat standards, food packaging and labeling, a national food policy, nutrition in school cafeterias, the problems of waste and energy conservation, a grant to the Allergy Information Centre, the lack of funds for Canadian research and development, proposed changes in the patent laws and foreign investment in Canada.

Abbott, appointed to the federal cabinet in the recent cabinet shuffle after two years in office, also confirmed that the upcoming revisions to the competition act will "most likely include" a provision for consumer class actions.

Class actions generally involve two or more individuals or a group of individuals suing companies on behalf of a larger group of consumers. They are covered by rules of procedure or legislation in most provinces but, as yet, they do not come under federal legislation.

"The amendments . . . are likely to include consumer class actions," he said, "and although they'll be restricted to competition aspects, they'll clearly be blueprints for further consumer class actions in other areas." It is expected the amendments will be introduced in the House this fall session.

Indicating his willingness to participate in further meetings with his constituents to discuss consumer concerns, the minister said in his department, which administers 29 acts, "emphasis is on the consumer . . . the weaker side of the equation."

More detailed reports appear on page 10.